

In today's world the effectiveness of duty and profession-based administration is widely accepted. Employing the right person for the right job yields positively in any administration. There is no such profession as a generalist's now-a-days. Bureaucrats who run the state administration in Bangladesh think that they are capable of accomplishing anything and everything. These government officials believe that they can perform any job with the highest skill and this belief has led them to be quite indifferent towards other officials' professional skills and knowledge. These are the very bureaucrats who have long been placed at the helm of our government ministries, corporations and boards etc. They just rotate from one ministry to another and from one corporation to the other. No where the stay is a prolonged one. According to them, this shift from one administrative discipline to the other adds to their experience as bureaucrats. They take immense pride in thinking that they have worked in so many disciplines in a short span of time. But his short-lived stay in each of the various ministries does not in any way help them in having faith and commitment to any discipline that they might have worked in. For this can very easily free themselves from taking any big responsibility or shouldering any guilt for their failures. Above everything, the free access of these 'generalists' often bars the way promotion for the very deserving and experienced technical personnel in the profession.

Actually, this type of bureaucratic practice has been so deep seated in our administrative system that it hampers prompt government decisions on development projects of any

kind. One has to climb almost 113 bureaucratic tiers before approval of any project. When a project is experimented and tested by a government department or organisation, it goes to the concerned ministry for approval. But the high officials of the ministry who yet again test and approve the project rarely have any expert knowledge about the issues involved. So, they often waste time in approving such projects. And because they do not have any prior knowledge about the projects, they often make wrong decisions and burden other professionals involved with their decisions which sometimes jeopardise the project itself. At last it is the professionals in the field who are victimised.

On policy making and implementation, it was mentioned in a survey of the Civil Officers' Training Academy in 1984 (which came out in the World Bank report during 1984-85) that it took as high as 1770 days and on an average 284 days, to decide national policies. This lethargic state of administrative pace still prevails very much in this country.

Till 1989, various donor countries and the World Bank gave Bangladesh a total sum of two billion US dollars for carrying out its development schemes. But much of the planned schemes still remains under the labyrinth of official files due to faulty administrative system, delay in policy making etc. If the state things continues as it is now, then the future seems to be a very gloomy one for this country.

With the end of the British Raj in Bengal, the much dreamt about social and economic emancipation could not be achieved even in the 24-year Pakistan rule. One of the car-

dinal reasons for this dream not to be realised was the dominance of 82 ICS officials, the last legacy of the imperialist British. The ICS gave birth to the CSPs. The CSPs were endowed with immense power during the oppressive rule of Ayub Khan in 1958. District Magistrates were made Deputy Commissioners, and later District Commissioners, and were given the charge of coordinating development activities, while people-elected Zilla Board Chairmen were overpowered and later replaced by DCs. They became municipality chairmen and Joint Secretaries became city Mayors. This is how people's representatives were replaced by government officials. Because all the top posts were reserved exclusively for CSPs, many deserving professionals could not contribute enough to their professions.

The emergence of an independent Bangladesh infused much hope and expectation in all the people. Professionals and technocrats were no exceptions. But what is regrettable is that the nascent government too failed to address this problem. The Bangladeshi CSPs again crept into the highest echelons of nascent Bangladesh's bureaucracy. Those who were junior CSPs very soon became Additional Secretaries and Secretaries in Bangladesh. So the yawning gap between professionals and bureaucrats remained a such. The limited government initiatives to bridge this gap was jeopardised by the vested bureaucratic interests.

The engineers of this country have always demanded a drastic administrative reform to resolve this crisis. In national policy making, they have long been demanding place of professionals and technocrats side by side with civil servants. Today's movement for a duty profession-based administration was conceived many years ago on the platform of Institution of Engineers of Bangladesh.

At the Institute's 13th Convention in 1967 its President, Engineer BM Abbas AT said, "I have found in general a sense of deep frustration prevailing amongst engineers. They feel that they have to work in unfavourable environments, where they are placed under non-technical people who lack in knowledge and experience to understand their proposals properly. They also feel that they have to discharge heavy responsibilities without corresponding authorities and are kept out of the decision making spheres of the government."

At the 16th Convention of Engineers' Institution, Pakistan, the then President of the Institution, Engineer M A Jabbar said, "If the technologists claim a right to more effectively participate in the activities of the state, this must not be construed as a technocratic claim for power but because of the growing significance of

technology in which technocrats alone can assist the country in taking the right course of action essentially required for its development. Top of the professional services consists of technologists in Australia. In France the civil service has always placed engineers and other specialists in key administrative posts. In West Germany and Sweden civil service mainly consists of professional specialists."

As a result of the pressing demand of the engineers 'Quazi Committee' was formed in 1968 and 'Cornelius Committee' in 1969. But the then CSPs foiled any development in this regard. After years of indifference and utter neglect all the engineers, doctors and agriculturists of the country united in 1978 on the platform of this Institution to float a movement for achieving their professional rights. During that time they had submitted a memorandum to the then government stating their demands. After prolonged discussion with the professionals and reviewing the memorandum, President Ziaur Rahman admitting all the professional demands stated that "a chaotic problem created through a period of 225 years cannot be solved instantly." He accepted a few of the professional demands and instructed the concerned authorities to take those into immediate effect. Only then, after so many years of neglect and indifference, the government took a positive initiative to solve the mounting crisis that was threatening to put our administrative system into a state of limbo. But later on, as it seemed, these orders were not very meticulously carried out. So the struggle continued.

After the enforcement of autocratic rule in 1982, few reforms that were taking shape during 1978 and '80 were again jeopardised by the vested quarters. In the name of Upazila, 838 members BCS (Admin) cadre was increased to a 5,500-member cadre. In the Secretariat, 60 to 65 per cent posts of Deputy Secretaries and Joint Secretaries were reserved for the members of the administrative cadre. The posts of DCs which were dismissed in 1978 were again brought into effect and the DCs entrusted upon the power of District Development Coordination and the engineers and other professionals suffered as a consequence. The professionals, again in 1983, submitted a memorandum to the government pressing their demands through IEB and after repeated discussions with the govern-

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stabilities of an administrative reform. Besides, Coordination Committee members, like Abu Hena, Engineer Khademul Islam and Yusuf have been harassed by the government on several occasions.

The demand for a duty and profession-based administration or historic movement for accountable and functional ad-

ministrative system is not a new one. The 17-point demand is also nothing new. These demands have been recognised in many republics. Some quarters have started propaganda against these rightful demands. This movement was not waged for mitigating the insatiable power-thirst of a particular professional group. It is a move-

ment to reform the administration and salvage it from all possible evils within. It is a movement that would create a new system, a new order, which is pure and free of any corruption. As no sensible citizen of the country would want that a professional group is looked down upon and discriminated against in any way, the demands are rightful. Let us all join hands in establishing this new system.

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